

VZCZCXRO0213
PP RUEHIK
DE RUEHVB #0005 0041322
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 041322Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9781
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ZAGREB 000005

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: ZAGREB DAILY REPORT: JANUARY 4, 2009

11. (U) FORMER PM SANADER ANNOUNCES RETURN TO ACTIVE POLITICS: Former Croatian PM Ivo Sanader held a special press conference at the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) headquarters on January 3 in which he indicated that his withdrawal from politics last year had been a mistake and announced his return to active political life within the HDZ as well as his plans to reactivate his parliamentary mandate. (NOTE: Sanader quit unexpectedly as prime minister last July without giving a clear explanation and was succeeded by Jadranka Kosor, who took over both as prime minister and president of the ruling HDZ party). Sanader said that his "decision to retire was completely wrong," and that during his absence, the HDZ had developed "a leadership deficit." While critical of HDZ leadership in his absence, Sanader was careful not to slight Kosor's work as Prime Minister. However, he noted that the poor showing of HDZ presidential candidate Andrija Hebrang in the first round of presidential elections last week was a prime example of this leadership deficit. Sanader labeled Hebrang's failure to make the second round presidential run-off as "the worst since the founding of the party in 1989," and said that Hebrang "is not the only one to blame for that." At the moment, Sanader seems to be getting support from a narrow circle of HDZ officials, while the majority of party members and coalition partners have made statements in support of PM Kosor. Public reaction to Sanader's return to the political scene has been almost exclusively negative. The former PM's popularity has plummeted since his retirement as numerous corruption scandals have come to light, which local media speculate may eventually be tied to Sanader. The HDZ presidency called an extraordinary meeting today regarding Sanader's announcement. More details on the development related to Sanader's return to politics in Croatia to follow as septel.

12. (U) CROATIAN SOLDIER IN ISAF SLIGHTLY WOUNDED: The MOD reported that a Croatian and U.S. soldier, who are members of the combined OMLET in Regional Command North (RC North), were slightly wounded during training on December 30. The soldiers were admitted to a U.S. field hospital and later ANA hospital within Camp Shaheen. According to the MOD, the wounds are minor and will have no permanent consequences. The press noted that this was the second Croatian soldier injured in Afghanistan.

13. (U) CROATIAN REACTION TO SERBIA'S DECISION TO FILE GENOCIDE COUNTERSUIT AT ICJ: The Croatian press reported that the Government of Serbia on December 31 decided to file its counterclaim against Croatia's genocide suit before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). When asked about the developments on January 1 by reporters PM Kosor said: "We have prepared evidence to prove Croatia was exposed to a Greater Serbian aggression under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, and that this was a war which we did not want, but we had to defend ourselves." When asked about the impact on bilateral relations, PM Kosor said that: "This is part of the past, while we share a common future and we would like to live as good neighbors." President Mesic noted on January 1 that the Government of Serbia would have a hard time proving

its case.
WALKER